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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 14 July 2003, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. KUCHINSKY (Ukraine)
(Vice-President)

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SPECIAL ECONOMIC, HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (continued)

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In the absence of Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala), Mr. Kuchinsky (Ukraine), Vice-President, took the Chair

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

SPECIAL ECONOMIC, HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (agenda item 5) (continued) (A/58/85-E/2003/80 and Add.1, A/58/89-E/2003/85, A/58/99-E/2003/94 and A/57/821-E/2003/86)

The transition from relief to development

The PRESIDENT introduced the panellists and announced that the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), would act as moderator of the discussion.

Ms. BELLAMY (Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)), Moderator, said that the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (A/58/89-E/2003/85) identified four broad types of transition according to whether the crisis in question was caused predominantly by economic transformation, a natural disaster, structural problems or conflict. The panel discussion would be focusing primarily on the challenges in situations of post-conflict transition, as identified in the report, namely, the need to provide appropriate assistance, balance delivery against support, engage donors and integrate planning and coordination.

In her introduction to the report, Ms. McAskie had cited the sobering statistic that almost two out of three countries emerging from war slipped back into conflict once again. That statistic underlined the importance of acting quickly to consolidate peace and lay the foundations for addressing the causes of the conflict. To meet the complex challenges of transition required a coherent strategy to create stability and peace. That was why the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA) and the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) had set up the Joint Working Group on Transition Issues, which drew its membership from a wide range of United Nations humanitarian and development agencies and included non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and representatives of the Red Cross movement.

Mr. LUBBERS (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)), Panellist, said that the problems of post-conflict transition could be solved only by broad-based cooperation. While the original mandate of UNHCR included cooperation with other organizations in the search for durable solutions, the recently introduced "Convention Plus" concept recognized that the organization needed to go beyond the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees if it was to find durable solutions and improve burden-sharing. He was convinced that such solutions would be found if only donors could be persuaded to give a fair share of development assistance to what he called "uprooted people" - not just refugees but also other people in refugee-like situations.

The fact that the Monterrey Consensus had little to say about post-conflict transition showed that there was still a long way to go to persuade the donor community of the importance of providing such assistance. Nevertheless, UNHCR had introduced into its own work the idea of development assistance for refugees (DAR), a concept that also covered assistance related to refugee problems. Local populations would be more prepared to accept refugees and less likely to see them as a burden if the international community were to offer the local population some modest development projects while encouraging refugees to be more self-reliant and less dependent on aid. Refugees who had been encouraged to be more self-reliant from the beginning of a crisis were better prepared for reintegration when they were eventually repatriated.

With that in mind, UNHCR had adopted the "Four Rs" concept (repatriation, reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction), which meant that it was able to withdraw once the refugees had been repatriated and development actors had taken charge of them. Pilot projects using the Four Rs approach had produced the conclusion that the approach worked only when it was internalized by the United Nations resident coordinator and country team. There was support for implementing the approach systematically, to ensure that uprooted people were sent home as soon as the situation was considered safe and stable.

The benefits of action to integrate refugees into the local community were not just theoretical: a number of African countries had already taken steps in that direction, recognizing that there could be no development in Africa unless solutions were found for the vast numbers of uprooted people in the continent. Moreover, as was recognized by the New Partnership for

Africa's Development (NEPAD) programme, if nothing was done to put the productive capacity of refugees to good use, there was a greater chance that the young men in refugee camps would become soldiers.

Mr. FORSTER (Vice-President, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)), Panellist, said that the mandate of the ICRC was to work towards the faithful application of international humanitarian law and to protect and assist all victims of armed conflicts and of their direct consequences, which included the consequences during transition periods. His organization believed it was of paramount importance, in planning a realistic humanitarian strategy, to make a thorough analysis of the conflict and local conditions. It had also found it important to maintain a presence in acute crises so as to be accepted as a neutral organization by all the parties to a conflict.

Transition periods were, by their very nature, of indeterminate duration and humanitarian problems persisted and sometimes became more acute. ICRC activities during such periods included protecting non-combatants, tracing missing persons, visiting prisoners and repatriating detainees. Its aim was to adopt a development-inspired strategy as soon as the situation permitted, but it sometimes had to extend protection to certain groups until well after the cessation of active hostilities.

Its policy with regard to assistance was based on adopting a participatory approach, strengthening local capacities, improving systems and addressing the psychological suffering of victims. However, it provided assistance only if it already had a presence on the ground and the ability to improve the situation and if no other organization was available. It favoured humanitarian action that preserved the gains made by its own programmes, enhanced protection and reduced tension.

He illustrated the ICRC approach with several practical examples of its action in transition situations. In Serbia and Montenegro, it had a residual responsibility towards those it had protected during the conflict, but it had changed the emphasis from distributing food to internally displaced persons to assisting the most vulnerable among them to find jobs through vocational training. It had extended the benefits of its primary health-care project in Kraljevo to the local population, while providing crucial moral support to the families of missing persons, in

cooperation with the local communities and NGOs. Improvements in the situation in the Sudan meant that the ICRC had been able to turn its attention from providing hospital care for the war-wounded to ensuring that more accessible health facilities were available to the population at large on a sustainable basis. The ICRC had supported the Dili hospital in Timor-Leste during the most acute phase of the crisis there and had subsequently handed over responsibility for it to the Department of Health Services.

The current situation in Iraq was a good example of a complex situation, although it could not be called a transition situation as such while fighting continued and the minimum level of security and a functioning administration were still lacking. The ICRC was stepping in where the occupying Powers were unable to provide the necessary services, especially in the field of health, water and sanitation. Its focus was moving towards protection activities and it was very active in helping prisoners of war, protecting the civilian population and, above all, searching for missing persons. It was also monitoring the implementation of the third and fourth Geneva Conventions by the occupying Powers.

The ICRC was fully committed to the participatory approach, but realized that it was more difficult to implement such an approach in transition periods than in peacetime. If the capacity of institutions had been affected by a conflict, it could be difficult to find local actors capable of running them at short notice. Empowerment should proceed at a measured pace and care should be taken to ensure that the participatory approach did not exclude certain groups of the population or give excessive authority to one particular group. It should be realized that concepts such as emergency rehabilitation and development during transition periods might be intellectually very useful, but what mattered most was the reality on the ground. It was important therefore that all the relevant local, national and external actors should provide adequate support on a continuous basis.

Mr. MOUNTAIN (Assistant Emergency Relief Coordinator, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)) said that the question of transition had re-emerged as a major issue because a number of countries had recently made the transition from conflict to peace or had shown signs of doing so. The issue of transition assistance was more complex and demanding than straightforward humanitarian assistance in terms of both resources and involvement. Each country required a different approach.

Three years previously, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) had prepared a set of Guidelines for Field Staff for Promoting Reintegration in Transition Situations. The first fundamental principle was that stability was the overriding priority. As transition periods were inherently unstable, the participation of all sectors of society at all levels was the key to success. The second principle was the importance of gaining the population's confidence. People needed to know that they would be provided with adequate protection and that they would be able to support themselves. Thirdly, local and international actors needed a shared vision to ensure their full engagement, and fourthly, field staff should bear in mind that protection and assistance were flip sides of the same coin.

The fifth principle was the importance of building capacity to promote integration. Capacity-building was a gradual process with many dimensions, involving the Government and civil society. The lack of national capacity in any transition programme was a formula for failure. In that context, it was important to encourage the return of qualified nationals and to promote gender mainstreaming.

Sixthly, although coordination was a time-consuming and energy-draining activity, it was essential if joint programming was to succeed, and seventhly, it was important to follow the flow of people and adopt a regional approach. The eighth principle was that ensuring staff security helped the staff to ensure civilian security. Ninthly, headquarters must help field staff to serve people in need, building on lessons learned from other countries and providing a necessary backstop through two-way communication. Tenthly, working with donors was part of the job. Donors needed to be persuaded of the importance of funding programmes and to see the advantages of being associated with a particular programme.

A number of partners had endeavoured to improve the capacity of Common Humanitarian Action Plans (CHAPs) to provide coherent strategies for different countries in crisis. However, it was proving difficult to define humanitarian assistance. For example, immediate requirements in Liberia differed in practice from the humanitarian requirements in Iraq. Issues were therefore defined in terms of the individual country context. It was equally difficult to define the word "transitional".

In the past, the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) had focused largely on the early stages of transition. The efforts being made to develop a coherent overall strategy were thus welcome. Some 24 CAPs had been planned for 2004, of which at least five or six would apply to countries in transition. It was vital to engage development actors early in the process, so that they could carry forward and benefit from the support provided from the humanitarian community. It was also important to underline the importance of donor funding strategies. While some donors divided their funding between humanitarian and reconstruction activities, others had recognized the possibility of combining the two types of funding.

Field coordination structures responsible for humanitarian issues were managed by humanitarian coordinators with the help of a country team. OCHA was looking forward to working closely with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Angola to ensure that the benefits developed over the previous decade could be carried forward.

Ms. HAQ (Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Recovery, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) said that the Government of a country in transition, however inexperienced, was a crucial partner in the transition process. National leadership, national ownership and capacity-building had to be encouraged. Although a transition process could be triggered by many different events, such as a ceasefire or a peace agreement, the main characteristics of such a process were an emerging administration, an overall move towards stability, increased security and increased hope of a permanent and lasting solution. Transition was also characterized by declining humanitarian needs, increased recovery needs, the demobilization of combatants and the granting of an amnesty. However, it was important to bear in mind that transition was not unidirectional; very often, countries slid back into conflict and required renewed humanitarian assistance. It was essential, therefore, to address the root causes of the conflict.

UNDP recognized the need, during the transition process, to establish the rule of law and to introduce a system of transitional justice, inter alia through the establishment of judicial commissions. It was important to consider, for example, how the authorities would address the problems that would arise when internally displaced persons returned home to find other people occupying their land. It was essential to protect vulnerable groups and to provide human rights training to protectors as well as to those who needed protection, so that they were aware of their

rights. Emphasis should also be placed on strengthening local governance, promoting the vital role of women as peacemakers and capacity-building. Another important component of the transitional process was the need to reintegrate people into their community with dignity. Therefore, people should be given the opportunity to earn salaries and to become involved in the reconstruction of their country.

Outlining the rationale behind UNDP support for transition, she said that violent conflicts or recurrent natural disasters erased decades of development progress and entrenched countries in poverty and inequality, making it even more difficult to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In many cases, the accumulated losses caused by conflicts and natural disasters exceeded the progress that had been made. It was therefore necessary to mitigate disasters and to introduce preventive measures in the least developed countries that were most vulnerable to natural disasters.

UNDP, in cooperation with its humanitarian partners, was strengthening its country office capacities to improve the management of crises and post-conflict situations worldwide. Transition recovery plans should be closely linked with national plans and should lay the foundations for poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs), the MDGs and future macroeconomic development. Although focusing on national ownership and local capacity-building was a slow process, it was important for long-term development.

Over 66 countries benefited from technical assistance and had programmes containing an element of conflict prevention and conflict assessment. In terms of transitional recovery, it was critical that integrated planning be conducted from the outset so that each partner was aware of its responsibilities. It was essential to ensure that the support provided from humanitarian agencies was built into the local budgets. The international financial institutions played a vital role in that regard.

Security was crucial to the transitional process. Therefore, it was essential to reintegrate the combatants into society and to reduce the availability of small arms. In addition, it was vital to clear landmines so that people could return to their land in safety.

A quick response was essential to the transition process. In Afghanistan, for example, UNDP had established the Afghanistan Interim Trust Fund (AITF) to meet post-conflict reconstruction needs, which had enabled the Government to pay civil servants' salaries for an initial six-month period. A number of public works projects had been introduced in Kabul to repair some of the damage that had been caused by the war. As a result, some 3,000 people, including women, had been provided with work and skills training. Assistance had also been given to establish the Judicial Commission and the Human Rights Commission. She drew attention to the innovative joint conference that had been held in May 2003 by the Government of India in cooperation with UNDP on South-South cooperation and the reconstruction of Afghanistan. As a result of that meeting, the Government of Mozambique had lent its support to the operation of disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation and the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh had assisted with the establishment of a civil service and NGOs in Afghanistan.

A number of outstanding issues remained to be addressed. For example, donors should be encouraged to create a transitional funding window or to develop more flexibility in funding relief and development activities simultaneously. In addition, as the nature of post-conflict environments called for quick disbursements for recovery activities, the United Nations system should be more effectively geared towards providing such assistance. Furthermore, additional support should be given to the resident coordinators and government aid coordination mechanisms during the transition process. Efforts should also be made to strengthen the support given to joint needs assessments during transition.

There was also a need to forge closer linkages with Common Country Assessments (CCAs), the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), consultative groups and PRSPs to ensure that the transition process was the first step towards achieving the MDGs.

Lastly, there was an urgent need to ensure that the special needs of women were addressed as a cross-cutting issue.

Mr. de MUL (Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator - Angola) said that return to normality was a preferable term to transition in post-conflict situations. It meant that all displaced persons had been given the opportunity to return to their place of origin and enabled to lead a normal life. In Angola, human rights and normality were the framework within which

efforts had been deployed to achieve that goal. Coordination meant a shared vision and a common position. The protracted nature of the conflict in Angola had forced the various humanitarian actors to work together and it had not been too difficult to find common ground. The CAPs had never focused entirely on humanitarian issues; thought had always been given to post-conflict recovery and development, and a number of scenarios had been worked out, however unlikely some of them were, so that no outcome would ever come as a complete surprise.

Emergencies and disasters were actually very simple matters; achieving normality and promoting development were by contrast extremely complex owing to the multiplicity of actors involved. In the preparation of CAPs, it had been found necessary to consider not just the immediate causes of conflicts, but also the deeper structural problems that existed in a given society, without which normality would never be attained. CCAs had been invaluable for identifying such problems. Coordination of humanitarian efforts was, of course, essential but also very expensive. The robust coordination framework that currently existed in Angola had helped to shape a common position among humanitarian actors and had greatly facilitated the setting of priorities.

Ms. BELLAMY (Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)), Monitor, invited participants to put questions to the members of the panel.

Mr. CHRISTENSEN (Observer for Denmark) said that it was important to consider whether the frameworks adopted actually worked in reality. For example, it would be interesting to know whether, in retrospect, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) had been the right organizational vehicle to facilitate the transition in Afghanistan and whether any organizational improvements could be made in the future.

As a donor, his Government had experienced no difficulties in combining humanitarian and development funding. It was important, however, that the agencies to which the funding was provided were able to cooperate among themselves.

The "Four Rs" concept was a way of defining a common strategy for a successful transition. However, according to a recent preliminary report by a Danish technical mission that had visited Sri Lanka, the proposal submitted for financing by Denmark in that case did not

represent any strategic thinking on how to offer better assistance in the future or on how the implementation of the concept would require changes in the work and administrative procedures of the agencies involved. The interlinkages between the components of the concept needed to be defined. His delegation hoped to see further progress in that respect in the future.

Mr. ISSAKOV (Russian Federation) said that the statistics showed that two thirds of transition processes ended in failure, with the country in question slipping back into violent conflict. He wondered whether any attempt had been made to identify the common features of those failures. In his own view, political machinations were usually responsible for setbacks. More analysis of political factors might explain why there was such a high rate of failure.

Mr. DORYAN (World Bank) said it had been a very timely decision by the Council to address the issue of financing humanitarian assistance in a more coherent way. The Bank had invested heavily in post-conflict reconstruction in recent years, even though its operations were defined by its policy of placing human security at the centre of the fight against poverty. Consequently, it did not take part in humanitarian or peacekeeping operations as such. Nevertheless, it had worked with United Nations agencies on transitional activities in countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Sierra Leone.

It had also taken an active role in fostering post-conflict recovery under two specific programmes, namely the IDA13 and the Low-Income Countries Under Stress (LICUS) initiatives. Recent research had shown that civil war put the development process into reverse, and that development could be an effective instrument in conflict prevention. An effective governance structure for managing natural resource revenues was required, to prevent them from being used to finance civil wars.

Substantial progress had been made in development circles through an increased focus on CCAs and PRSPs, greater emphasis on sound monitoring, the alignment of national priorities with international actions, and the creation of appropriate financing structures. He wondered whether a similar framework could be established for humanitarian affairs, by linking aid to good practices, transparency and the optimum division of labour. It was also important to identify the necessary elements for successful humanitarian operations.

Mr. GOPINATHAN (India) said that the fragile administrations of countries emerging from violent conflict were faced with a bewildering multiplicity of agencies, not to mention NGOs, vying to take part in reconstruction activities. None of those agencies was prepared to step aside and pass up the opportunity of enhancing its profile and justifying its activities to donors. Consequently, the agenda was driven by the demands of agencies' headquarters, rather than by the actual country needs articulated by the national Governments. It was worth remembering that the beneficiary of humanitarian assistance should be the Government of the country affected, and not the United Nations agency responsible for delivering aid. He asked for the views of the panellists on how national Governments could be empowered to derive the maximum benefit from competing agencies, and how to ensure that those agencies respected their mandates.

Mr. LUBBERS (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)), Panellist, said that the right structure had been chosen for administering the transition in Afghanistan, with an appropriate ownership balance between the national Government, on the one hand, and the international organizations, on the other. The problem of how to make the transition out of the initial emergency stage had arisen. His concern was that United Nations agencies were leaving too quickly and that such departures were likely to increase the country's vulnerability to security setbacks. The problem was one of commitment rather than structure. The current intention of UNHCR was not to be in a rush to return all Afghan refugees to their country. Some of them would undoubtedly decide to remain in their host countries, either temporarily, or on a more long-term basis.

In response to the comments made by the observer for Denmark concerning activities in Sri Lanka, he said that only when the "Four Rs" concept had been fully internalized by United Nations structures on the ground could it become operational. Donors also had a responsibility to provide constructive criticism, rather than standing back and passing judgement on the performance of agencies.

With regard to the observations by the representative of the Russian Federation, the work of UNHCR was inevitably affected by political matters. For instance, the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo had pursued a strategy of seeking the return of refugees to support their claim to have established a stable, representative Government. UNHCR was not a passive observer of such political machinations.

While praising the World Bank for its assistance with the demobilization and reintegration of former soldiers, he said he would appreciate the same level of commitment towards reintegrating the victims of armed conflict. There was a common misunderstanding that development would automatically benefit such people whereas, in actual fact, unless they received specific assistance, they were likely to send countries back into conflict. Humanitarian assistance would be doomed to failure, unless it also focused on providing people with the motivation and means to find productive employment.

While acknowledging the problem raised by the representative of India, he said that, on the other hand, some countries criticized his organization for not doing enough. He often had to resist pressure to undertake high-profile activities.

Mr. FORSTER (Vice-President, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)), Panellist, said that the security situation in Afghanistan had not substantially improved. His organization had been forced to limit its operations, following the murder of one of its staff members in the south of the country. The dilemma faced by international actors was when to begin to make positive noises concerning an improvement in the situation, with a view to building confidence in the local community. By making such noises too early, however, they risked creating a sense of frustration and, possibly, increasing instability.

There should be greater transparency at the planning stage, with a view to ensuring that plans were based on the mandate and capacity of each individual agency. The situation described by the representative of India did not always arise. For instance, there were a number of forgotten or frozen conflicts where it was very difficult to find actors willing to take over from the emergency response provided by organizations such as his own.

Mr. MOUNTAIN (Assistant Emergency Relief Coordinator, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)), Panellist, said that the establishment of individual programme secretariats, as well as a humanitarian assistance advisory group, had been among the positive developments in Afghanistan. The Guidelines he had mentioned were intended for field staff, with a view to enhancing stability. The outcome of the Stockholm International Meeting on Good Humanitarian Donorship was a significant development in humanitarian affairs, and had shown that progress in financing was not confined to development activities. Agencies had made dramatic improvements in working together more effectively, and the overall picture was far more encouraging than that described by the representative of India.

Ms. HAQ (Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Recovery, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)), Panellist, said that the Afghan relief operation had posed problems for all humanitarian agencies because it had forced them to think outside agency mandates. In particular, a strong insistence on national ownership had meant that the Afghan Government had reviewed needs assessments already conducted by United Nations agencies, which had resulted in some backtracking and duplication of effort. With regard to the "Four Rs" approach in Sri Lanka, there had been widespread understanding and appreciation of the need for integrated planning among all the actors involved, particularly at the local level.

As for the point made by the representative of India, it should be borne in mind that there were many levels of "response" to conflict recovery, which were by no means limited to the response of the central Government. In particular, there was usually a flood of requests from technical ministries to their counterparts in United Nations specialized agencies. The main challenge was to find ways to manage aid coordination capacity at every level.

Ms. BELLAMY (Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)), Moderator, said that the appropriate structure for providing humanitarian and disaster relief assistance would be determined by the specific situation in a given country. The Joint Working Group on Transition Issues had identified a number of lessons to be learned from humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan, among which was the need to decentralize planning from headquarters to the field.

Mr. BACKSTROM (Finland) said that, in view of the relative normality that currently prevailed in Angola, he had been given to understand that CAPs would shortly be replaced by transitional appeals. Further information on the subject would be welcome.

Mr. BALAREZO (Peru) said that natural disasters tended to receive less attention than political conflicts. He would like to know whether the panel thought that such a view was justified.

Mr. SULAKELDIN (Observer for the Sudan) said that humanitarian actors in the field would appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the development of policy rather than being constantly relegated to an implementation role.

Mr. de MUL (Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator - Angola), replying to the question by the representative of Finland, said that the operation to resettle internally displaced persons in Angola had proved much more complicated than originally expected, and, consequently, that humanitarian operations would probably be extended into 2004. It was therefore unlikely that CAPs would be dispensed with for the time being, although the situation was being monitored closely.

Mr. LUBBERS (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)), Panellist, said that, on the whole, he agreed with the observation made by the representative of Peru. There was a media-driven tendency to dwell on political conflicts at the expense of natural disasters. Moreover, his own Office had traditionally focused on conflicts.

Mr. MOUNTAIN (Assistant Emergency Relief Coordinator, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)), Panellist, said that slippage inevitably occurred in all planning arrangements. It should be borne in mind that, although more people died as a result of natural disasters, the basic structure of society usually emerged unscathed. On the point made by the observer for the Sudan, it seemed to him that humanitarian aid agencies had learned a great deal from field experience, both in the Sudan and elsewhere.

Ms. HAQ (Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Recovery, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)), Panellist, said that natural disasters received less attention than they deserved, and much remained to be done in terms of disaster risk reduction,

management and response. More generally, there was no easy definition of "transition" from conflict or disaster to recovery. It was a fluid process that inevitably engendered some degree of mandate creep among the various humanitarian and relief agencies involved.

Ms. BELLAMY (Executive Director, United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF)), Moderator, said that, in natural disasters, the Government's capacity to respond was usually much greater than in political crises. In addition, natural catastrophes tended to be less protracted and there were fewer reversals. That being said, it was true, however, that the humanitarian community should devote more time to the question of natural disasters.

With reference to the comment by the observer for the Sudan, she too had felt on occasion that the Council's humanitarian segment was subordinate to the operational side, but forums such as the current one did provide an opportunity to share views and exchange experience. For its part, the Joint Working Group on Transition Issues had conducted a number of field-case studies, thereby demonstrating its commitment to engage and receive feedback.

The PRESIDENT said that the United Nations had a central role to play in managing the transition from relief to development. However, there was always a political side to such transitions, and the inclusion of the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations on the panel would have added value to the discussion.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.